

Seaford Music Society

Gala Concert, Saturday 29th June 2019 at 7.30 pm

Melvyn Tan and Friends

Melvyn Tan *Pianoforte*

Ruth Rogers *Violin*

Sebastian Comberti *Cello*

Welcome to this very special Seaford Music Society concert. In 2017 Melvyn Tan honoured us by becoming our Patron, and this evening we are even more honoured to have him playing for us. He has brought two friends, Ruth Rogers and Sebastian Comberti, to perform with him. We hope you will join us after the concert in the Church Hall, where wine and juice will be available and you will be able to meet the performers in person.

Melvyn Tan was born in Singapore in 1956. He showed prodigious musical talent during his childhood, and at the age of twelve came to England to study at the Yehudi Menuhin School. His piano teachers, Nadia Boulanger, Vlado Perlemuter and Marcel Ciampi, sparked his lifelong passion for French music in general and the works of Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen in particular. During his time at the Menuhin School he was encouraged to think about the nature of music, to consider its structure and shaping forces, and to ask questions of the score. After he enrolled at the Royal College of Music in 1978 he broadened his scope of enquiry to include the sounds of early pianos and the playing styles that conditioned them.

Tan's decision in 1980 to specialise in fortepiano was rewarded by rapid professional progress over the following decade. He forged an artistic partnership with Roger Norrington and the London Classical Players, intensified in 1987 during a landmark tour of Europe, America, Canada, Australia and Japan. Capacity audiences attended their Beethoven Experience weekend at London's South Bank and subsequent international tour, during which Tan performed on Beethoven's Broadwood fortepiano of 1817.

Not content to rest in the box reserved for early music practitioners, Tan began exploring works on the modern concert grand piano. He launched this new phase of his career on Christmas Day 1996 with a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No.9 'Jeune homme', given in Cologne with the Deutsch Kammerphilharmonie. The following year he gave a recital of Chopin's Préludes and Schumann's Kreisleriana at Wigmore Hall in London. Tan's refreshing interpretations of everything from Bach and Rameau to Chopin and Debussy are directly informed by his knowledge of historical playing styles and intuitive feeling for the modern piano's timbres and textures.



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Tan has performed as concerto soloist with such prestigious ensembles as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, Salzburg's Camerata and Mozarteum orchestras, Melbourne Symphony, and on tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. More recently, he has made regular appearances with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and with the London Chamber Orchestra, recording Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 12 and Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 on the orchestra's LCO Live label.

After an absence of two decades, Melvyn Tan made a triumphant return to Singapore in January 2011. He played to a full Esplanade Hall and has since returned regularly to Singapore for orchestral and recital performances and to teach young musicians. Since September 2012 he has shared his knowledge of pianos old and new and of the art of interpretation, as Artist in Residence at Singapore's Yong Siew Toh Conservatory.

Born in London in 1979, **Ruth Rogers** began violin lessons at the age of five. In 1997 she was awarded a Foundation Scholarship to the Royal College of Music to study with Itzhak Rashkovsky. There, she won many major prizes and awards. She graduated in 2001 with First Class Honours and was awarded the Tagore Gold medal – the College's highest accolade – by HRH The Prince of Wales. Further study followed in the Netherlands with Herman Krebbers.

As a soloist, Ruth's playing has been described as "not calculated in any sense, her performance style and technique so assured that the music flows as a natural consequence of innermost understanding. Ruth Rogers must be one of the most gifted young violinists in Britain" (*Musical Opinion*). Winner of the prestigious Manoug Parikian Award, and chosen as a 2004 Young Artist by the Tillett Trust, Ruth also reached the Finals of the YCAT competition, Royal Overseas League, and BBC Radio 2 Young Musician of the Year. She gave her London debut recitals at the Wigmore Hall and the Purcell Room in 2003 and has also appeared as a soloist at the Royal Albert Hall, St John's Smith Square and many other venues.

From 2008 until 2012 Ruth was the co-leader of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. She also performs with the John Wilson Orchestra. In March 2015 Ruth was appointed as one of the Leaders of the London Mozart Players. She regularly guest leads the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Aurora Chamber Orchestra, and has appeared in principal roles with the Hallé, Philharmonia and RLPO. She has led orchestras under the batons of such maestros as Lorin Maazel, Daniele Gatti, Sir Colin Davis and Sakari Oramo, and has performed concertos with the City of London Sinfonia, City of Oxford Orchestra, London Strings, and New London Soloists Orchestra.

As a chamber musician, Ruth has performed at the Aldeburgh and Bath Festivals with the Tate Ensemble and with pianist John Lill in Shostakovich's piano quintet. She is a member of the Iuventus String Quartet and the Aquinas Piano Trio and has appeared at the Wigmore Hall with the Nash Ensemble. In February 2009 Ruth reached the final of an International Duo Competition with Martin Cousin – the Franz Schubert and Modern Music International Competition, which took place in Graz, Austria. They were one of five duos in the final, chosen from thirty-seven participating duos.

Ruth was chosen personally by Lorin Maazel to perform with the tenor Andrea Bocelli in a series of concerts, which has led to television and radio broadcasts and further concerts worldwide at such venues as the Pyramids in Cairo, the Acropolis in Athens, and the Piazza del Campo in Siena. They performed together at the Royal Albert Hall with the English Chamber Orchestra for the Classical Brit Awards. Ruth has given recitals at the Brighton, Buxton, Harrogate and Warwick Festivals thanks to the Tillett Trust. She has given recitals with Martin Cousin in Indonesia and Thailand.

In 2006 Ruth played to orphans, refugees, malaria patients and land-mine victims on the Thai-Burma border, and in 2008 she went back there with the Luventus Quartet. In February 2006, Ruth's debut recital CD was released. Recorded with pianist Sarah Nicolls, it features works by Handel, Elgar, Ginastera, Massenet, Fauré, Kreisler and Kroll, and proceeds from its sales go to help those in need on the Thai-Burma border. Ruth has also recorded Piazzolla's 'History of the Tango' with guitarist Morgan Szymanski, and released several discs as a member of the Aquinas Piano Trio.

Born in London, **Sebastian Comberti** studied in Italy with Amedeo Baldovino, and later with Derek Simpson and Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music, from where he graduated in 1977. In 1976 he became a founder member of the Bochmann Quartet, giving concerts throughout the British Isles and in Europe.

In 1983 Sebastian was appointed principal cello with the London Mozart Players, with whom he has since appeared frequently as soloist, as well as being an active member of the LMP Chamber Ensemble. A keen interest in historically informed performance has resulted in participation with a great many period instrument groups, frequently appearing as principal cello with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and soloist with the Hanover Band. Research into early cello repertoire has led to several recitals being recorded by the BBC. In April 2001 Sebastian founded Cello Classics, a label devoted to recordings of rare repertoire and artists.

As a soloist for the CPO label he has recorded 4 CDs of the Sinfonia Concertantes of JC Bach, while as a member of several chamber groups he has recorded for CRD, EMI, Harmonia Mundi, Hyperion, Meridian, Phoenix and RCA. In April 2001 Sebastian founded Cello Classics, a label devoted to recordings of rare repertoire and artists, for which he has himself released CDs of hitherto unknown sonatas by Boccherini, quartets for 4 cellos, early 19th Century sonatas with fortepiano, and discs of Sonatas by Stephen Paxton and concertos by Haydn and Zumsteeg with the OAE.

Since 1978 he has been a founder member of the 2-cello quintet Divertimenti, recording for Hyperion, Dutton Sound and Cello Classics. With Maggie Cole and Kati Debretzeni he forms part of Trio Goya. Their 2018 CD of Beethoven Op. 1 Trios has been received with great acclaim.

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio No. 4 in B flat major, Op.11, 'Gassenhauer'

- I *Allegro con brio*
- II *Adagio*
- III *Tema: 'Pria ch'io l'impegno'*

Although Beethoven wrote this *B flat Trio* for the virtuoso Bohemian clarinettist Joseph Beer, it was also published in an alternative version with the violin replacing the clarinet. It dates from 1796 or 1797. Despite the composer having arrived at an early stage of maturity, the piece has the fresh spontaneity of an earlier work and has no illusions of profundity. A bold, arresting statement opens the piece, announcing a number of themes which make up the first group. Two powerful chords bring this section to a close, allowing the clarinet/violin to introduce the second theme. The listener may be fooled by a couple of false endings before the movement finally comes to a conclusion.

An expressive *cantabile* melody opens the Adagio, in which the cello is highlighted. The same instrument also announces the second theme with an ascending scale, to which the clarinet/violin replies.

The final movement is a set of variations on the aria *Pria ch'io l'impegno* from Joseph Weigl's opera *L'amor Marinaro (The Corsair)*. This was a well known and popular tune, or Gassenhauer, from which the Trio obtained its nickname. Why this theme should have been chosen is a mystery. Some accounts credit its suggestion to the publisher, and others to Joseph Beer. Whatever the truth, it seems that Beethoven was not happy with it, either because he had not been informed of its source, or because he disputed its suitability as a subject for variations. Despite his doubts, the listener cannot fail to be amused and delighted by these witty essays on a gay, attractive melody.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Impromptus, Op.90, D899: No. 3 in G flat major and No. 4 in A flat major

Of all Schubert's piano writing, none is more famous than his two sets of *Impromptus*, Opus 90 and 142, both written in 1827. One of the reasons for their lasting popularity is that they represent the first major departure from the sonata form so dominant in piano writing. They anticipate the Romantic period's obsession with short, lyrical piano pieces evoking a certain mood. The moods of the *Impromptus* range from the dramatic and passionate to the thoughtful and contemplative. All have the song-like, lyrical qualities always associated with Schubert's style.

Schubert cannot be credited with having invented the form, the word *impromptu* having come into use in Vienna in the early 1820s as a name for a short keyboard piece, usually in ternary form (A-B-A) and written in the manner of an extemporization. Along with the *Moments Musicaux*, Schubert's *Impromptus* set a standard for a whole genre of 19th-century music. The title, however, was not Schubert's but the publisher's (Haslinger of Vienna).

Impromptu no.3 could have been a song, with its sublime melody and rippling accompaniment. Apart from a central excursion into the minor key, the character of the piece remains fairly constant throughout. (Notoriously, some 19th-century editions transposed it up a semitone into G major, supposedly because amateur players could more easily cope with one sharp than six flats. The action was misguided, not to say disrespectful to the composer: thanks to Schubert's genius for modulation, the hapless pianist still faced excursions into remote keys.)

The last Impromptu of the set takes the form of a scherzo and trio, the main idea of the scherzo being a tricky *arpeggio* figure in the right hand, while the sonorous melody of the trio section is accompanied by pulsating chords. The piece starts in A flat minor but ends in a blaze of A flat major.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Adagio in E flat major for Piano Trio, Op.148, D897, "Notturmo"

This *adagio* movement for piano, violin and 'cello was published in 1846, long after Schubert's death, and cannot be exactly dated, but its similarities, in style and modulations, to the slow movements of the *String Quintet* and the last piano sonata make it likely to be a late work – as far as anything is late in Schubert's short life.

It is thought that it was originally intended as the slow movement of the *B flat Piano Trio*, D898. Nor is its published title *Notturmo* all that wide of the mark, since its wistful subject hovers dreamily, as though played by distant horns. Its more energetic secondary material, heard twice, is in three-time instead of the original slowish four, but is linked to the rest of the movement through its persistent dotted rhythms.

After two bars of spread tonic chords on the piano, the principal melody is announced by violin and cello, using identical rhythm pattern, and in parallel thirds. A restatement of this theme is transferred to the piano, with the strings accompanying. Shortly the music moves into E major, and from a 4/4 to a 3/4 time signature. This section manifests some force, and even drama, and keeps the piano in continuous triplets, allowing the string duo most of the melodic content. The original key of E flat is re-established, and a few bars of linking material keep the piano busy with triplets, whilst violin and cello hint at the principal subject. This shortly appears, although with some ornamentation. The second triple-time section returns briefly and, for a time, in C major. It is, however, the key of E flat that asserts itself to take a final, highly-charged reference to the principal subject. The closing bars are most delicately wrought.

It is a movement tinged with sadness, not only in its melodies, but also through the harmonic colour, which displays some originality, and often surprise, as always with the music of this gifted composer.

INTERVAL 25 MINUTES

Wine and juice will be served at the back of the Church and in the Church Hall (go out of the main church door, turn half left, and cross the churchyard to the hall at the bottom of the path).

Toilets are also located in the Church Hall.

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Images, Book 1, L110: No. 1 'Reflets dans l'Eau' and No. 3 'Mouvement'

These pieces are from the first of two sets of *Images* that Debussy wrote for the piano. It has been said that many of Debussy's works could be called 'images' and he did write a third and quite different set for orchestra. *Images, Book 1* was written and published in 1905. Debussy was so pleased with the pieces that he told his publisher that "they work well and will take their place in piano literature alongside Schumann and Chopin". He considered it was not "false vanity" to say so.

Reflets dans l'eau, is one of the composer's many impressionistic 'water' pieces, and he himself compared its opening to a pebble dropping in a pool and producing a series of concentric circles. Debussy makes use here of the scales, such as the whole tone scale and the pentatonic, which are particularly associated with his music.

The final piece, *Mouvement*, written in a much more 'modern' style, is a busy *perpetuum mobile*, the motion taking the form of a succession of triplets which continue without a pause, except for point in the middle where a slower theme is introduced.

Maurice RAVEL (1875-1937)

Violin Sonata No. 2 in G major, M77

- I *Allegretto*
- II *Moderato (Blues)*
- III *Allegro (Perpetuum Mobile)*

“In the writing of the Sonata for Violin and Piano, two fundamentally incompatible instruments, I assumed the task, far from bringing their differences into equilibrium, of emphasising their irreconcilability through their independence” (Ravel)

This work was written between 1923 and 1927, at a time when Ravel's musical style was undergoing a change. Having absorbed his mother's Basque musical heritage, Ravel received his formal musical education in Paris, to where he and his parents had moved from the Pyrenees when he was only three months old. He quickly showed a preference for composing over performing, and Debussy strongly influenced him as he matured as a composer. After the First World War he became enthused by jazz, although it was not till 1928 (after this sonata was composed) that Ravel made a four month tour of the United States, meeting George Gershwin and hearing jazz in night clubs in Harlem.

While Ravel may have felt the incompatibility of violin and piano (one naturally melodic, the other percussive), his skill as a composer enables them to share musical ideas and echo each other, so that the sonata is a conversation, not parallel monologues. The textures are spare and harmonies open, often in the upper registers of both instruments, giving the first movement especially a feeling of light openness.

The piano opens with a sinuous, rhythmically flexible line, taken up by the violin and underlaid by a little pecking motif in the piano which, as it re-appears throughout the movement, is sometimes unsettling, at other times delicate. For the second subject the piano moves to open chords to accompany a melodic line on the violin. The opening line returns on the piano to introduce the development, which reaches a brief climax as both instruments descend from the top to bottom of their ranges so that the opening re-emerges from the depths for the recapitulation. This time the violin finds a warm lower register counter-melody to the sinuous opening line. Finally, the opening line trickles down on the piano to come to a quiet rest.

A famous dance-band leader is said to have described the second movement as a perfect *Blues*, faultlessly constructed and conveying all the sadness and nostalgia implicit in this form. The piano keeps the beat, while the violin slides notes and syncopates rhythms to conjure a singer or saxophone. Ravel uses bi-tonality (the two instruments playing in different keys) and blues harmonies to enhance the exotic melancholy feel of the movement.

A breathtaking last movement now follows, with no rest for the violinist's agile fingers. Ravel is said to have written to his violinist, "It won't be very difficult", but ask the violinist how true this is! The movement is heralded by a brief re-call of the 'pecking' motif of the opening movement, before the violin launches into its non-stop semiquavers, against which the piano makes its own way, sometimes providing a rhythmic background to the violin, while the violin at other times turns its incessant stream into an accompaniment for the piano. Brilliant and technically challenging, the movement has a driving force which carries it forward to a blazing conclusion.

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918), arr. Sally Beamish

La Mer, Trois Esquisses Symphoniques, L109

Sally Beamish writes:

To arrange La Mer for piano trio was one of the biggest challenges I've encountered. The temptation was to represent every note from Debussy's score, but in order to do that (in any case nigh on impossible), all three musicians would have had to be playing all the time, which could have led to an unchanging, dense texture.

I decided instead to look at the piano trio itself as a medium – particularly works by composers such as Ravel – and reinvent Debussy's orchestral score with the piano trio in mind. I needed to create light and shade, and subtleties of colour. This meant exploring what strings and piano can do in terms of texture, and concentrating on idiomatic and natural techniques. This led to the use of harmonics, mutes, bow position – such as *sul ponticello* (glassy sound made by playing very near the bridge) – various doublings between piano and strings, and using unisons to create new 'instruments' – like mixing blue and yellow to make green.

Once I'd completed the score, I worked with the players, who often suggested feats of virtuosity I hadn't thought possible, thereby opening up new possibilities previously discounted. It was an immensely satisfying experience to collaborate on re-creating this iconic score for these inspirational players.

La Mer, arranged for piano trio, was commissioned by the Trusler Carroll Wass Trio, with additional funding from the Lincoln International Chamber Music Festival, and many individual sponsors, as a companion piece for 'The Seafarer Trio'. It was first performed at the Lincoln Festival 2013. Both pieces were recorded on Orchid Classics and released in 2014.

After the concert, we invite you to join us in the Church Hall, where wine, juice and nibbles will be available, and you will be able to meet tonight's performers. On leaving the church, turn half-left and walk down the path through the churchyard to the Church Hall.

The full programme for our 2019-2020 season is available now, at the table at the back of the church. If you don't already have your copy, come and collect one!

If you are not already a member of Seaford Music Society, join now and receive a £15 refund on the cost of tonight's concert ticket!

(Turn the page to find out how)

Tickets for tonight's concert cost £17.50 for Members of Seaford Music Society, and £32.50 for non-members – a difference of £15. **If you are not already a member, join the Society now, and receive a £15 refund on your ticket.** Here is what to do:

- Pick up our 2019-2020 concert brochure from the table at the back of the church
- Complete the membership form
- **EITHER** hand the form to our Membership Secretary, Paul Moore, together with your ticket for tonight's concert and payment of £45 (£60 membership subscription, minus £15 refund on your £32.50 ticket); payment may be made in cash, by cheque or by credit/debit card
- **OR** send the form to the address shown, **together with your ticket for tonight's concert** and a cheque for £45 (£60 membership subscription, minus £15 refund on your £32.50 ticket); **your form, ticket and cheque must be received by Saturday 6th July 2019 in order for you to benefit from this offer**

Membership of Seaford Music Society gives you the following benefits:

- Attendance at all five of our series of chamber concerts
- Attendance at our Family Concert at no additional cost
- The right to bring one guest to any of our chamber concerts at a reduced price of £12 (the usual price for non-members is £15)
- The right to attend, and vote at, our Annual General Meeting, as well as to attend the members-only social event that normally precedes it

Forthcoming events:

Sunday 20th October 2019, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church, Seaford

The first concert of our 2019-2020 season will feature the **Divertimenti Ensemble**, and will include music by Mendelssohn and Sally Beamish.

Details of whole season are in the brochure, available at the back of the church. In summary, the remaining concert dates are:

Chamber concerts:

Sunday 24th November 2019, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church: Capriccio Ensemble

Sunday 9th February 2020, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church: London Mozart Players Chamber Ensemble

Sunday 8th March 2020, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church: Melvyn Tan & Maggie Cole (4 hands at one keyboard)

Sunday 10th May 2020, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church, Belgrave Road (note the venue): this may be your last chance to listen to the Endellion String Quartet, in their farewell season

Family concert:

Sunday 5th April 2020, 3.00 pm, at St Leonard's Church: Family Concert: Haydn Seek! (Lasts 1 hour)